

Vera, the fourth and final super typhoon of 1979, originated in an active near-equatorial trough (NET) which extended through the Caroline and Marshall Islands. Vera was first analyzed as a weak surface circulation 100 nm (185 km) southeast of Ponape on 27 October and was included on JTWC's Significant Tropical Weather Advisory (ABEH PGTW) for the next 4 days as it remained in the NET. Low-level inflow during this period was split between several weak eddies.

By 300000Z, synoptic data indicated that the low-level inflow was now concentrated into the developing cyclone. Meanwhile, the convective activity increased rapidly over a 24-hour period from 310000Z to 010000Z. A Tropical Cyclone Formation Alert was issued at 010000Z November based on increased upper-level outflow and a continued decrease in surface pressure.

Aircraft reconnaissance at 012100Z found an ill-defined circulation center with a central pressure of 1004 mb and estimated surface winds of 15 kt (8 m/sec). Numbered warnings began at 020000Z based on an improved satellite signature. Rapid intensification occurred, and TD 24 was upgraded to Tropical Storm Vera 6 hours later. Vera continued to intensify, reaching typhoon strength by 0000Z on 3 November while 190 nm (352 km) south-southeast of Yap. At this time, the 200 mb analysis revealed that a large upper-level anticyclone, previously located northwest of Vera at 010000Z, was weakening and was no longer restricting Vera's outflow to the north. By 020000Z, the anticyclone situated over Vera had become the dominant upper-level synoptic feature over the western Pacific.

From the time of the first warning until her approach to the Philippines northeast of Samar, Vera moved on a virtually straight west-northwest track. The major influence on her movement was the unusually strong mid-tropospheric subtropical ridge over the western Pacific. The strength of the easterly current south of the ridge steered Vera at forward speeds of 20 to 22 kt (37 to 41 km/hr)--almost twice the climatological average--as she passed 35 nm (65 km) south of Yap. As a result, although JTWC's forecast tracks were consistent and accurate, forecast forward speeds lagged behind Vera's actual speeds. The underestimates were considerable during the early stages of acceleration.

Vera continued to intensify during her west-northwestward acceleration and reached super typhoon intensity only 18 hours after being upgraded to a typhoon. Reconnaissance aircraft reports indicated Vera maintained super typhoon strength for over 24 hours before weakening as she approached Catanduanes Island. The peak wind reported on Catanduanes Island was 50 kt (26 m/sec) at 051200Z as Vera passed just off the coast.

The island chain began restricting low-level inflow as Vera continued northwestward toward northern Luzon. Vera made landfall north of Tarigtig Point packing winds of 90 kt (46 m/sec).

After landfall, the onset of enhanced low-level northeasterly flow over the Taiwan Straits coupled with strong upper-level southwesterlies over the Philippines resulted in vertical disorganization and rapid weakening of Vera. Radar and aircraft reports indicated the low-level circulation continued to track northwestward over the Cagayan River valley and exit into the South China Sea near Culili Point south of Laoag. The upper-level circulation sheared off near Tuguegarao and was tracked using satellite imagery northward over Aparri then east-northeastward into the Philippine Sea. Surface synoptic and ship reports at 070000Z indicated that a secondary surface center existed near Baguio. At the same time, the primary center was crossing the Cordillera Central Mountain range 95 nm (176 km) to the north (Fig. 3-24-1).

After exiting into the South China Sea, the strong northeast monsoon flow accelerated Vera southwestward, and the final warning was issued at 1200Z on the 7th downgrading Vera to a tropical depression.

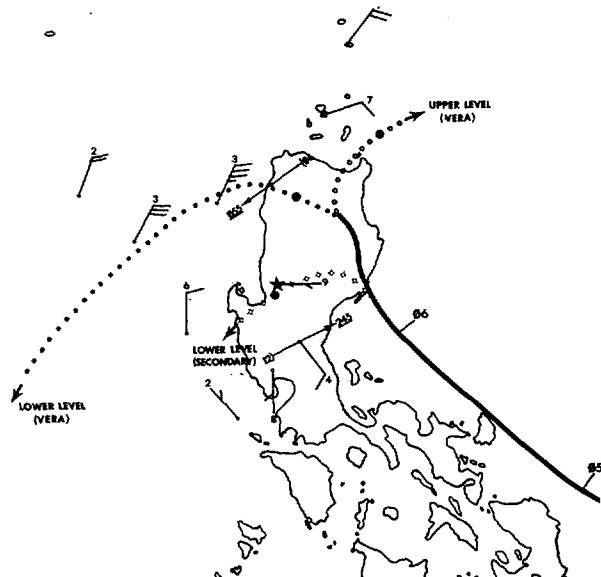


FIGURE 3-24-1. Tracks of low-level and upper-level centers after the upper-level sheared off over northern Luzon. Synoptic and ship reports at 070000Z November indicate secondary low-level center near Baguio (WMO 98328) (indicated by a star). The 070000Z center positions are indicated by solid dots. Wind speeds are in knots.